

WILD TIMES



KIDS MAGAZINE

FALL 2019

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HOW HUNTING HELPS WILDLIFE

WILDLIFE AND ROAD CROSSINGS

WHAT IS CONSERVATION?



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HABITAT CONNECTION



What is conservation?

You might hear people saying the word “conservation”, but do you know what it means? Conservation is the wise use of natural resources to make sure they exist in the future. Wildlife and the habitat they use are natural resources that the Game and Fish manages in Wyoming. The Game and Fish wants everyone to be able to enjoy and use these resources. It is fun to be outdoors, hunt, fish and watch wildlife -- but we all need to work hard so these resources are around for future generations as well. To be sure that people are able to enjoy doing these activities years from now, the Game and Fish makes sure to use science, research and input from the public to make wise choices about how these resources are used.



Hunting Helps Wildlife

In the fall, many people look forward to going hunting. There are a lot of reasons why people love to go hunting, including spending time outdoors with their friends and family, harvesting healthy meat to eat and for the sport of it. What is surprising to some people is how hunting is very important for wildlife conservation. To explain this, we have to take a look back in time....

In the early 1900s, many wildlife species in North America were not doing well because of habitat loss and over-hunting. At this time, there were hardly any laws about how many animals should be hunted. This was concerning to many people, especially those

who wanted to make sure that wildlife would be around for future generations to see and hunt. So, these people, called conservationists, got together and created a plan called the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation.

This plan, which still guides wildlife agencies like Wyoming Game and Fish Department today, aims to protect wildlife by managing it wisely using science. Biologists study wildlife to decide how many healthy animals can live in the habitat. If there are extra animals on the landscape it can lead to disease, starvation and damage to the habitat. Hunting removes the extra animals the habitat cannot support, which

keeps the wildlife healthy in the long run.

The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation also explains that money raised by selling hunting and fishing licenses should pay for improving habitats, studying wildlife and making sure hunting and fishing laws are being followed. Today, Game and Fish manages over 800 species of wildlife - that includes animals you can't hunt or fish for - mainly with money raised from hunting and fishing licenses. The department also gets money from a special tax that is added to hunting, fishing and boating gear as well as donations from conservation organizations.

WILDLIFE PROFILES



Pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*)

Range: Pronghorn are only found in western North America from southern Canada into northern Mexico. They can be found as far east as Kansas and as far west as Oregon.

Size: Pronghorn are about 3 ½ feet tall at the shoulder and weigh between 90 and 120 pounds.

Habitat: Pronghorn live mostly in open grasslands, deserts and sage brush. Some pronghorn also undergo some of the longest migrations, which is when they move long distances from one place to another, in North America. They travel from southwestern Wyoming to northwestern Wyoming.

Young: Pronghorn give birth to one or two fawns at a time. When they are born they have almost no smell and hide in the grass

so predators can't find them. After a week of hiding they will join the herd. By the time they join the herd they are already faster than any human ever!

Predators: Being the fastest land animal in North America and the second fastest in the world makes them pretty hard to catch, but occasionally they can be. They have been known to be eaten by coyotes, cougars, wolves, bears and eagles.

Food: Pronghorn love eating plants! In fact they are herbivores, which is an animal that eats only plants. Pronghorn are known to eat grass, shrubs and even cactus.

Did you know? Pronghorn are the fastest land animal in North America, reaching speeds of over 50 miles per hour!

WILDLIFE PROFILES



Black-footed ferret (*Mustela nigripes*)

Range: Historically, the range of black-footed ferrets was the grasslands of western North America. Today they live in small pockets of grasslands where they have been reintroduced, including the Shirley Basin and Bighorn Basin of Wyoming.

Size: Adults are long and lanky weighing from 1.4 to 2.5 pounds. They are typically 19 to 21 inches long.

Habitat: They live in grasslands with large populations of prairie dogs. They find shelter in dens made by prairie dogs.

Young: Baby ferrets are called kits. Typically kits are born in litters of 3 to 5 and live below ground in a prairie dog burrow for their first 6 weeks.

Predators: The predators of black-footed ferrets are great horned owls, American badger and prairie rattlesnake.

Food: Black-footed ferrets eat prairie dogs. They are specialists which means they eat only one type of food.

Did you know? Black-footed ferrets were thought to be extinct, but a small population was found in Meetese, Wyoming in 1981. After a few years, the numbers of this population had dropped to 18 and they were captured and brought to captive breeding facilities. Today, ferrets are released around their previous range in an effort to bring back their population.



Two mule deer crossing through an opening in a fence that is designed to keep wildlife off of roadways.

Safe passage

While driving in Wyoming, you might see a wildlife overpass or underpass. These are built to help wildlife who may be migrating through or living in an area cross over or under a road safely so that they do not get hit by a vehicle. Tall fences are used to guide wildlife to safely cross roads by using the underpasses and overpasses. And for the few animals that do find their way into the highway right-of-way, there are wildlife “jumps” installed in the tall fenceline

that allows animals to jump from a small ledge out of the right-of-way, but not back in.

“It can be a bit of a learning process for the animals for a year or two,” said South Jackson Game Warden Kyle Lash. “But as they figure out the safe crossings, it’s going to be a great thing for wildlife, and motorists.”

Game and Fish is also partnering with the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WyDOT) to set lower speed limits at night in areas where

there are a lot of wildlife crossing the road between sunset and sunrise. In April of this year, the Game and Fish and the WyDOT worked together to identify the most important wildlife crossing sites around the state. Recently, the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission and the Wyoming Transportation Commission both dedicated \$1.25 million each toward starting a new project to help wildlife and public safety on roadways near Big Piney.

OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

Create your own migration obstacle course!

Many animals migrate from one habitat to another seasonally. One example in Wyoming is the mule deer. The longest known mule deer migration in the United States happens in western Wyoming. These mule deer spend their summers in the Hoback Basin between Pinedale and Jackson, and then travel down to the Red Desert near Rock Springs for the winter. In their high elevation summer habitat, the deer are able to find plenty of green plants to eat and build up a good amount of fat reserves to survive the harsh Wyoming winter. In the winter, they travel down to the low elevation winter habitat where there is significantly less snow accumulated on the ground.

Deer face a lot of limiting factors during their annual migrations. A limiting factor is something that reduces a population. **For migrating wildlife, these might include:**

- Crossing roads (getting hit by cars)
- Predators (mountain lions, wolves, coyotes)
- Disease
- Harsh winter conditions
- Competition for food / availability of food
- Fences to jump
- Rivers to cross
- And many more!

Use materials such as the examples below, or other materials you find around the house, to create an obstacle course that models the limiting factors that migrating wildlife face. Have your friends join in and see who can survive the migration!

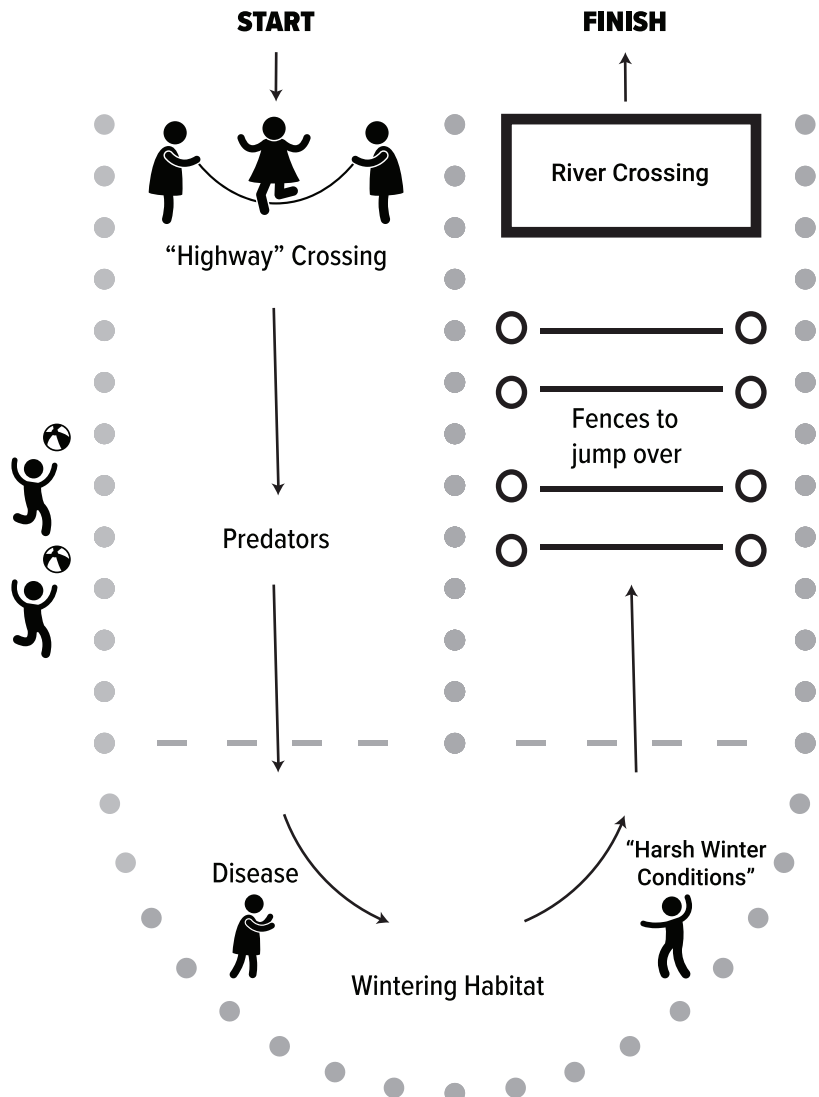
Location: Large space free of tripping or collision hazards outdoors or indoors

Example Materials:

- Jump rope (highway crossing challenge)
- Tarp = River to cross (jump over)
- 1-2 balls for the “predators” to toss
- 4-5 poles or sticks balanced between rocks to simulate fences
- Some friends to join in as “disease,” “harsh weather conditions,” “predators,” and “deer”

After doing the obstacle course, ask yourself:

- Did you notice any trends in where wildlife losses were the greatest? Why do you think this happens? Do you think this happens in nature? Why or why not?
- What would happen if all of the wildlife that began the migration survived the journey? Would that have a positive or negative impact on the environment?
- What was realistic about this obstacle course and what was not?



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

CIRCLE THE CORRECT ANSWER

IF YOU AREN'T SURE,
LOOK AROUND IN THIS ISSUE TO FIND THE ANSWER!

CONSERVATION IS THE WISE USE OF NATURAL RESOURCES **TRUE / FALSE**

WILDLIFE OVERPASSES AND UNDERPASSES HELP ANIMALS SAFELY CROSS ROADS **TRUE / FALSE**

HUNTING HELPS WILDLIFE CONSERVATION **TRUE / FALSE**

MIGRATION IS EASY FOR WILDLIFE **TRUE / FALSE**

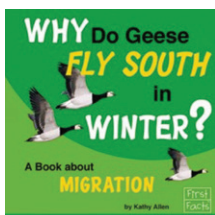
ROAD CROSSINGS ARE A LIMITING FACTOR FOR MIGRATING WILDLIFE **TRUE / FALSE**

Answers:

Answers: 1=True; 2=True; 3=True; 4=False; 5=True

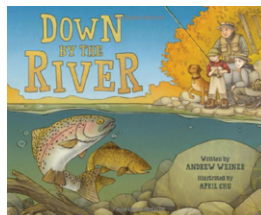
LEARNING LINKS

Books to check out



Why Do Geese Fly South in Winter?: A Book about Migration, by Kathy Allen

Why do animals migrate? Which ones hibernate instead? How do animals know when to leave? How long does their journey take? This book answers all these questions and more



Down by the River, by Andrew Weiner

A heartwarming picture book in which a child learns about different kinds of flies, tackle, and the trout that frequent a favorite river while fishing with his family.



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